MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
MARVEL COMICS
157
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
VENGEANCE SHANG CHI
NEW WARRIORS NICK FURY
MACNEIL '94

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

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MICHAEL KRAIGER ASSISTANT EDITOR
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COVER BY COLIN MACNEIL

NICK FURY

"JURY OF YOUR PEERS"

WRITER.....MARIANO NICIEZA
PENCILS .....KRIS RENKEWITZ
INKER.....BRAD VANCATA
LETTERER ..... UL HIGGINS
COLORIST.....CARLOS LOPEZ

On a rescue operation mission deep within a Hydra complex, Nick Fury searches for two missing agents and the sadistic number 16.

KYMAERA

NEW WARRIORS SOLO
PART 3 OF 4
"MOTHER MAY I"

WRITER .....ED LAZELLARI
PENCILS .....ED LAZELLARI
INKS .....JOE ROSAS
LETTERS .....ED LAZELLARI
COLORS.....ED LAZELLARI

Mother Matrix has Kymaera in her clutches but for how long?

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MARVEL READERS PRESENT

387 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10016

Dear Richard and Michael,

Having lost faith in the regular DAREDEVIL title, I am pleased ad infinitum that MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS for a short while can make it up to me by producing a truly high-quality story set in Daredevil's,sphere of influence. Ann Nocenti is indisputably the best writer this title has ever seen; her scripts are always deep and intricate, and it is my heartfelt experience that there is emotion and purpose behind her every single word.

And now in MCP #150, she teams up once again with Steve Lightle, undoubtedly one of the most artistically aware illustrators in the business, to continue the unparalleled literary visual greatness begun in MCP #109-116 and #123-130. This Typhoid Mary story is, in my perception, the very pinnacle of Marvel comicdom today, and I cannot praise it enough. May Ann always continue to glorify Marvel comics with her presence.

Now, regarding MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #151:

I'm sorry, but the views on sexual politics kind of lose perspective when they're put forth by such an obviously insane character as Bloody Mary. However, they can still yield some impressive results, to be sure, and Mary's development from Typhoid to Bloody does make a whole lot of sense. I can't help feeling that with such skillful portrayal of Multiple Personality Disorder, Ann Nocenti should be writing THE INCREDIBLE HULK.

To continue about characters' views; I consider Wolverine's views highly questionable! The world is divided into classes and survivors, but not even a little bit into struggling gender roles?! Get real, Wolvie! Doctors *all* want to get their fingers into our brains and brainwash us?! That sounds pretty paranoid to me, even if he did have a good point in the case of Dr. Hunt!

I must say, though, that it was extremely nice to have the major characters have views at all! In superhero comics, that is in fact rarely the case in any serious way, but commendably it is the rule rather than the exception in Ann Nocenti's thoughtful stories! I will always return to her literary ventures for Marvel, because comic book stories just don't get any better than the stuff she produces.

I must also congratulate Ann with the ending of this issue (the page just before the last). All I can say is: *Fabulously effective!* Mary's statement will surely go right to the soul of an eventual woman-abusing male reader, and haunt his subconscious for a very long time! Of course some of the credit for this effect also goes to the artist, speaking of whom: Fred Harper's art was far more exciting and expressive than I dared hope for, especially in terms of page design. Beautiful!

Next time Ann does a Typhoid story, how about having the original Typhoid artist, John Romita Jr., come back and pencil it? As thrills go, this would be one of the biggest!

Both issues of MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #150 and 151 were absolutely great. Do that kind of thing again, please. It's the best arrangement of MCP that I could ever wish for (especially with art as good as this!); a team book starring four or five characters, but one of them--preferably the villain--being the center of the plot. I have not been buying the Midnight Sons issues, and it's going to take a design like #150 and 151 (with meaningful stories, of course) to make me return to this title on a regular basis.

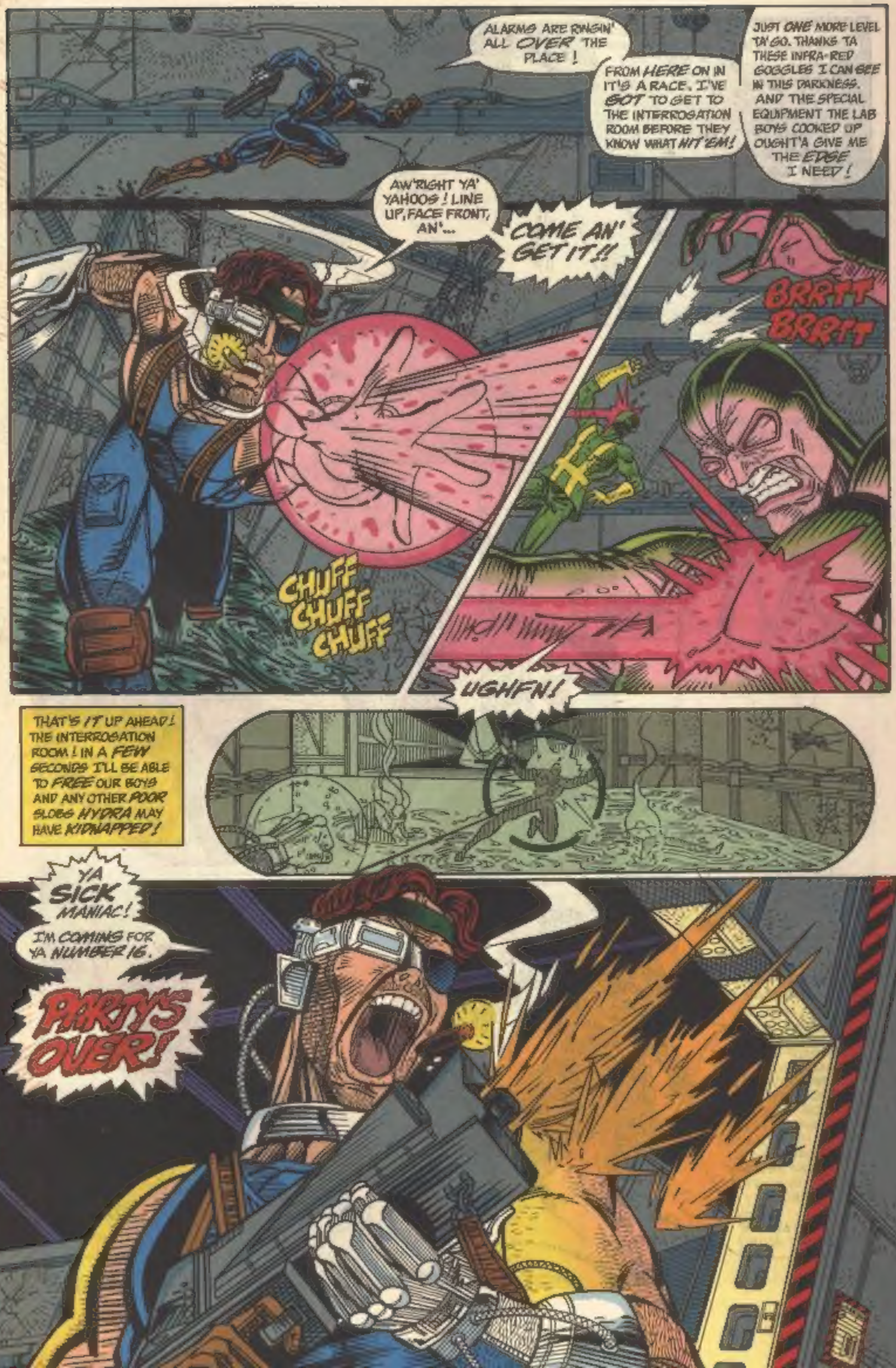
(continued)

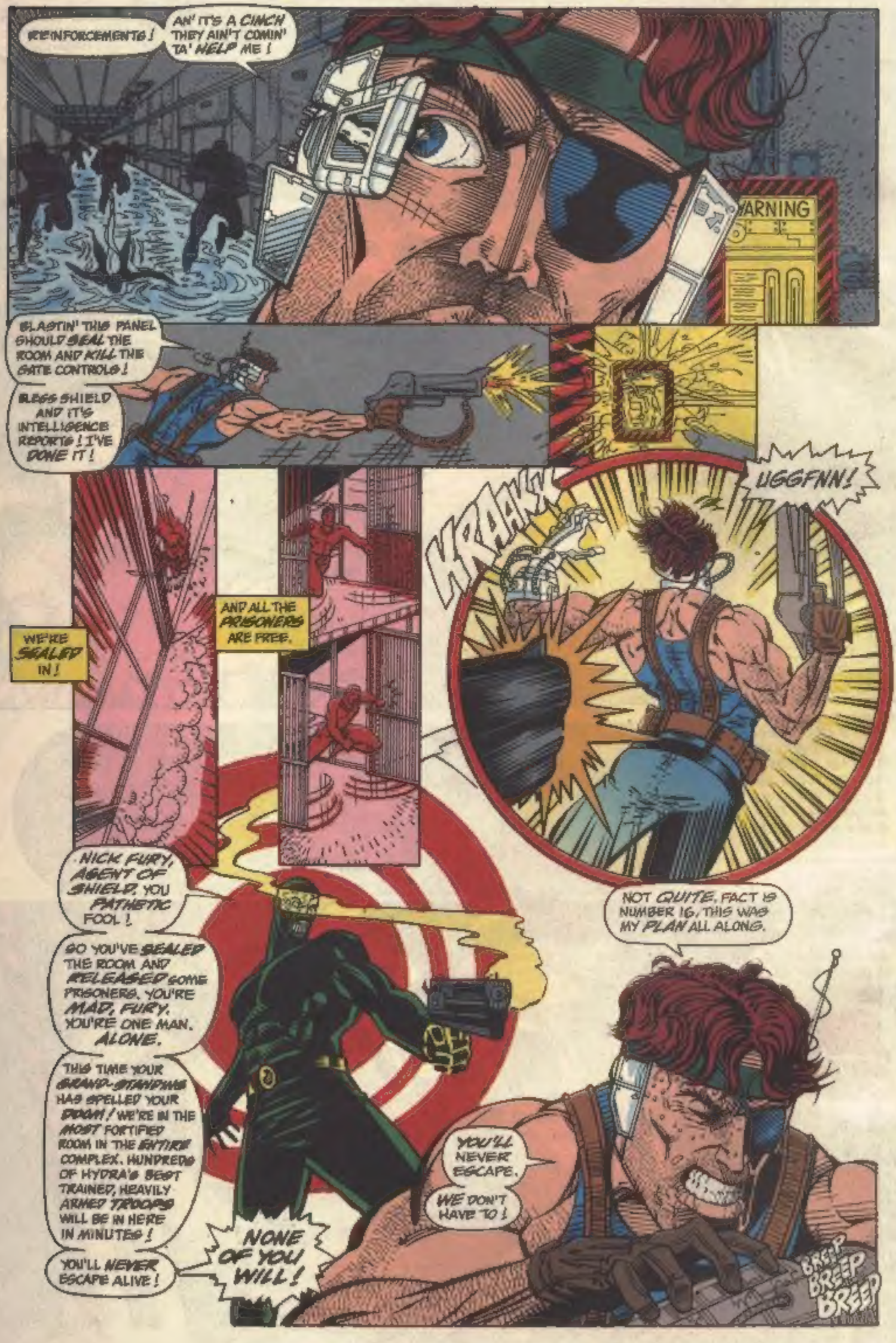
JURY OF YOUR PEERS
FIELD REPORT--FURY RECORDING. IT'S 4:00AM IN LAMIA AND I'VE WORKED MY WAY INTO THE HEART OF THE HYDRA COMPLEX.
IF OUR INTELLIGENCE REPORTS WERE RIGHT, THE TWO MISSING SHIELD AGENTS ARE BEING HELD IN THE LOWEST SUB-LEVEL.
A LUNATIC BY THE NAME A' "NUMBER 16" HAS BEEN KIDNAPPING SPIES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD PRESUMABLY TO EXTRACT INFORMATION, THEN SELL IT TA THE HIGHEST BIDDER.
HE'S A SADISTIC MANIAC AND A SPY.
MY KIND'A GUY.
I'VE BEEN ABLE TA' SNEAK ARDUND SO FAR, BUT NOW IT'S TIME TA' GO PUBLIC!
IF THIS PLAN WORKS IT'LL BE THE BIGGEST MIRACLE PLAY OF THE YEAR!

THIS AIN'T EXACTLY MAJOR LEAGUE PITCHIN'...
BUT IT'LL DO!
BOINK BOINK
HEY, SMOKE!
HAK! HAK!...CAN'T BREATHE!
HAK! HIT THE ALARM YOU IDIOT! THE ALARM!
KR-KRAKK
THEY JUST DON'T MAKE HYDRA GOONS LIKE THEY USED TO.
TWO DOWN AND ONLY 378 MORE TO GO! OF COURSE THAT'S NOT COUNTING THE BIG ENCHILADA HIMSELF...

NUMBER 16.
YOU SHIELD AGENTS ARE SO RECALCITRANT.
HERE IN THIS SUB-LEVEL INTERROGATION ROOM I AM YOUR MASTER! YOU'LL DO AS I COMMAND!
NOW, ONCE AGAIN... WHAT IS THE ANSWER?
I...ARGHH... DON'T... ARRGGHH... KNOW...:HUFF: :HUFF:...
I CAN'T HEAR YOU, SHIELD SCUM! WHAT-IS-THE-ANSWER?
I DON'T... KNOW... :HUFF:
I SPENT MY YOUTH WORKING FOR THE SECRET EMPIRE, THE ORIGINAL SONS OF THE SERPENT AND NOW HYDRA! OVER THE YEARS I'VE LEARNED THE ANSWER!
NOW I WANT TO HEAR IT FROM YOUR LIPS!
I DON'T...EVEN... AARRGGHH!.. KNOW...THE QUESTION...
YOU MISS THE POINT.
PAIN IS THE ANSWER. AND I'M GETTING ALL THE ANSWERS I NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU RIGHT NOW...
AAARRRGGGHH

MADE IT TO THE POWER ROOM. THE TIMING IS CRITICAL. ONE WELL PLACED EXPLOSIVE AND THE ENTIRE COMPLEX WILL BE BLACKED OUT!
BANG ON TIME.


ALARMS ARE RAISIN' ALL OVER THE PLACE!
FROM HERE ON IN IT'S A RACE. I'VE GOT TO GET TO THE INTERROGATION ROOM BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM!
JUST ONE MORE LEVEL TA' GO. THANKS TA THESE INFRA-RED GOGGLES I CAN SEE IN THIS DARKNESS. AND THE SPECIAL EQUIPMENT THE LAB BOYS COOKED UP OUGHT'A GIVE ME THE EDGE I NEED!
AW'RIGHT YA' YAHOOS! LINE UP, FACE FRONT, AN'...
COME AN' GET IT!!
CHUFF CHUFF CHUFF
BRRTT BRRTT
UGHFN!
THAT'S IT UP AHEAD! THE INTERROGATION ROOM! IN A FEW SECONDS I'LL BE ABLE TO FREE OUR BOYS AND ANY OTHER POOR SLOBS HYDRA MAY HAVE KIDNAPPED!
YA SICK MANIAC!
I'M COMING FOR YA NUMBER 16.
PARTY'S OVER!

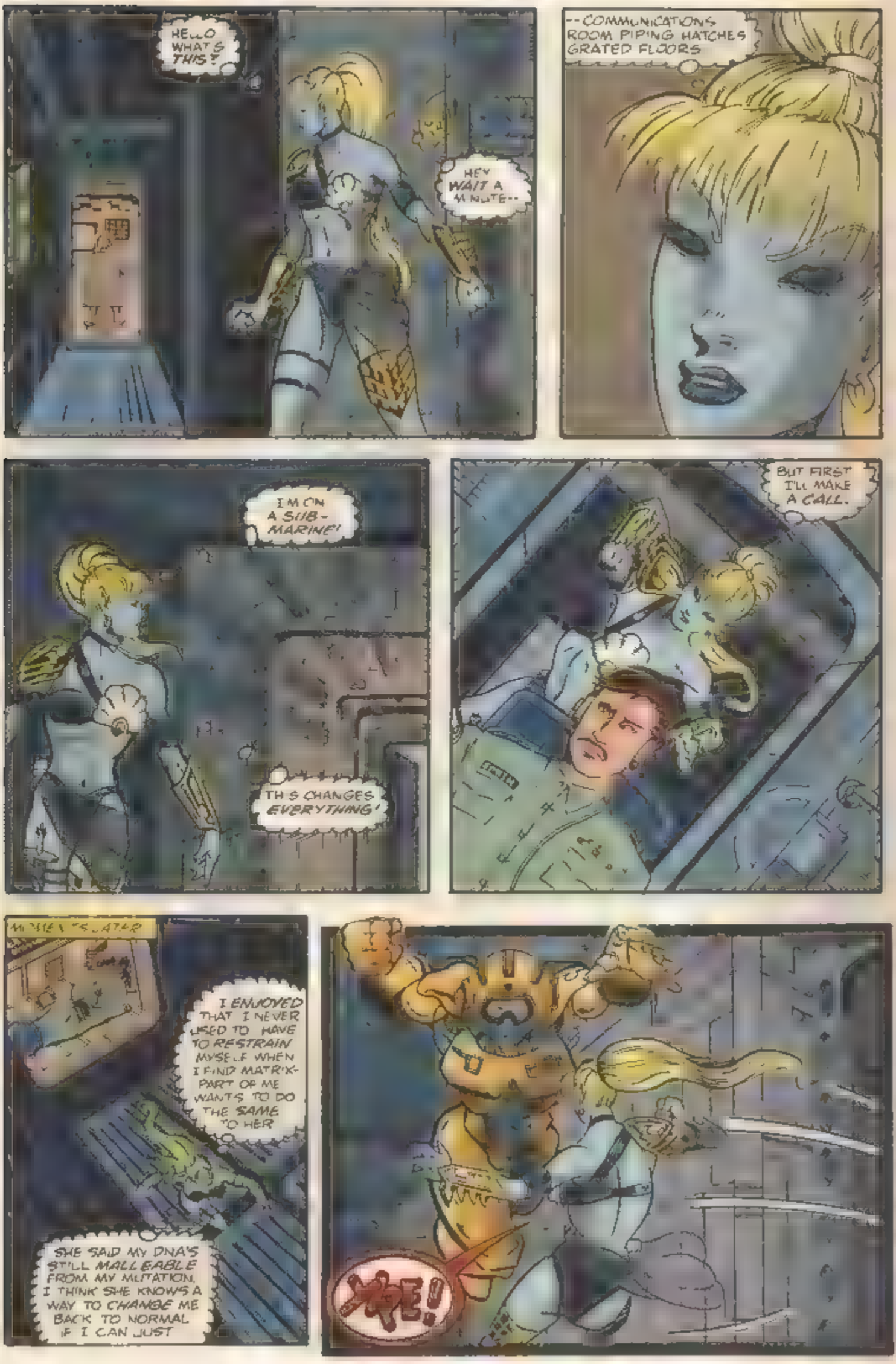

REINFORCEMENTS!
AN' IT'S A CINCH THEY AIN'T COMIN' TA' HELP ME!
ARNING
BLASTIN' THIS PANEL SHOULD SEAL THE ROOM AND KILL THE GATE CONTROLS!
BLESS SHIELD AND IT'S INTELLIGENCE REPORTS! I'VE DONE IT!
KRAAK!
UGGFNN!
WE'RE SEALED IN!
AND ALL THE PRISONERS ARE FREE.
NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD, YOU PATHETIC FOOL!
SO YOU'VE SEALED THE ROOM AND RELEASED SOME PRISONERS. YOU'RE MAD, FURY. YOU'RE ONE MAN. ALONE.
THIS TIME YOUR GRAND-STANDING HAS SPELLED YOUR DOOM! WE'RE IN THE MOST FORTIFIED ROOM IN THE ENTIRE COMPLEX. HUNDREDS OF HYDRA'S BEST TRAINED, HEAVILY ARMED TROOPS WILL BE IN HERE IN MINUTES!
YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE ALIVE!
NONE OF YOU WILL!
NOT QUITE. FACT IS NUMBER 16, THIS WAS MY PLAN ALL ALONG.
YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE.
WE DON'T HAVE TO!
BREEP BREEP BREEP

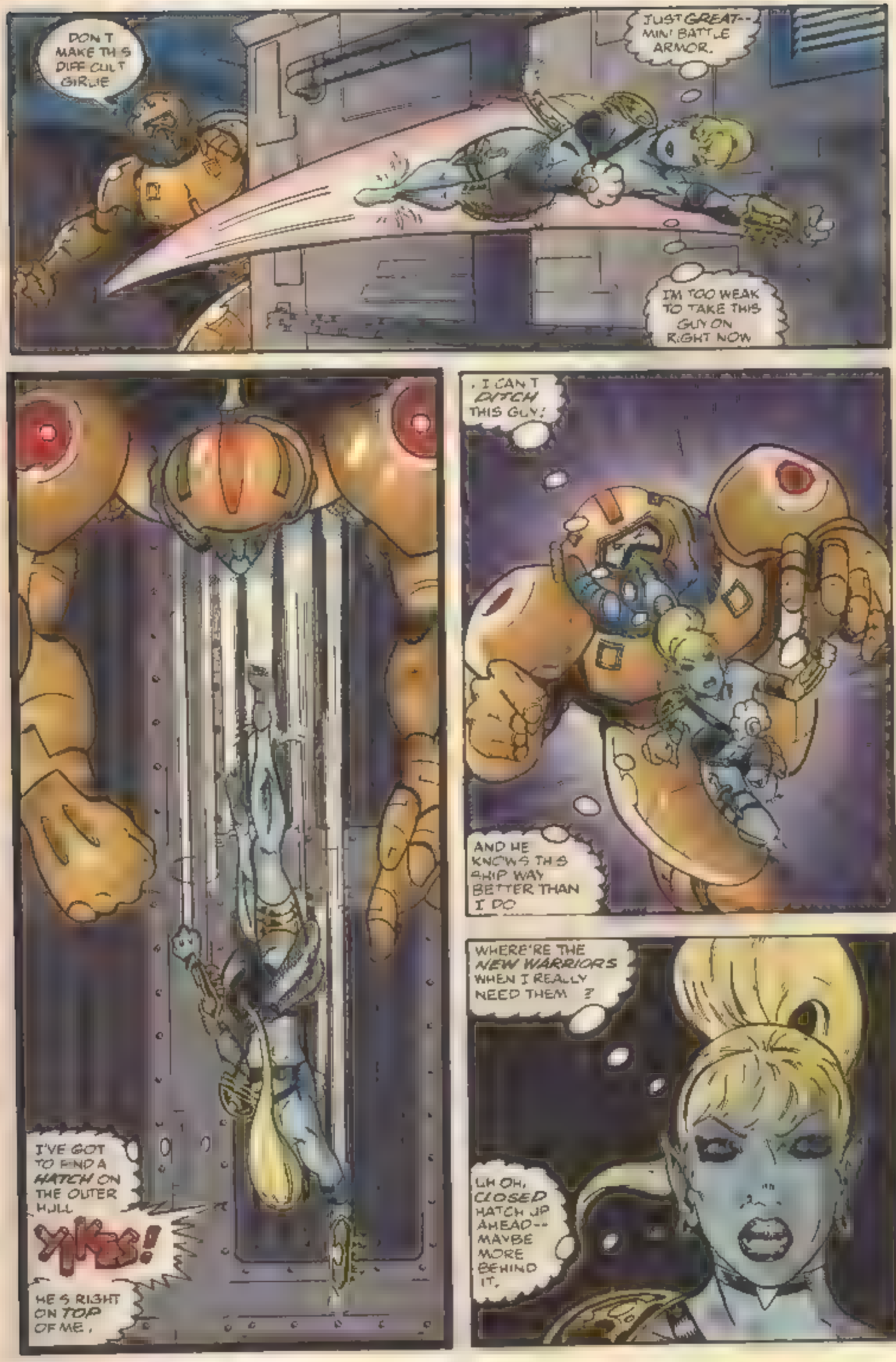
FURY TA HELICARRIER... I'M IN AN' SEALED TIGHT.
LET'ER RIP!
FOOSH FOOSH FOOSH
KRRAA-KOOM
AAIEEE
THEY'RE DESTROYING THE ENTIRE BASE!
RUN! RUN! GET OUT!
MY MEN.
MY BASE.
NO...

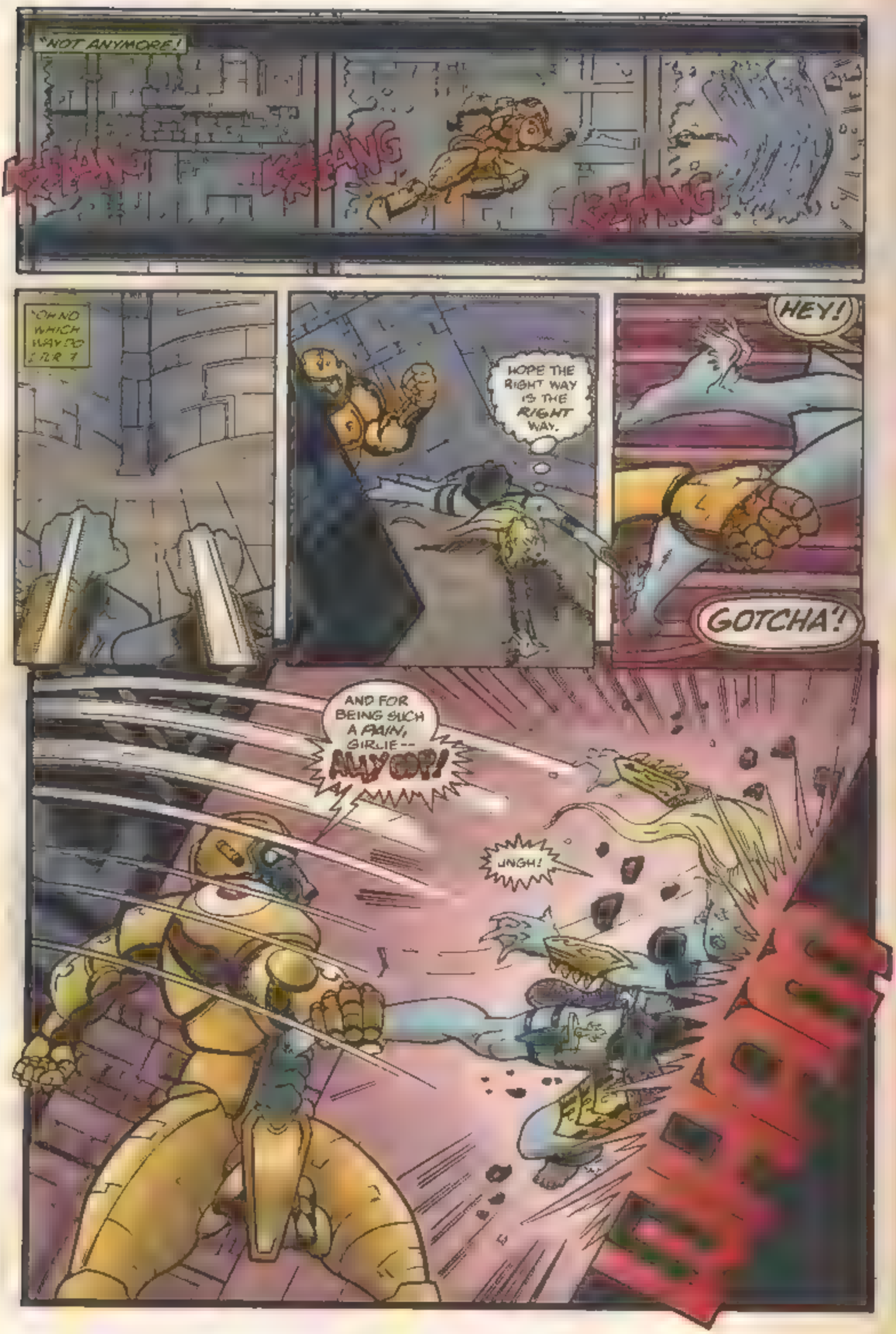
KREEEEEEK
FACE IT NUMBER 16. WE'RE SAFE, BUT YER BASE IS TOAST!
HYDRA BUILT THIS LEVEL TOO WELL. WE GOT THE SPECS AND FIGURED IT COULD EASILY WITH-STAND THIS POUNDING.
QUESTION IS, AFTER WHAT YA DONE TA' THESE PEOPLE... CAN YA WITH-STAND THEIRS?
NO.
NNOOOO!
FIELD REPORT--FURY RECORD-ING. IT'S 4:27 A.M. THE OPERAT-ION IS OVER. WE HAVE NUMBER 16 IN CUSTODY, AND WE'RE TAKING HIM BACK TO THE U.N. TO STAND TRIAL FOR HIS CRIMES.
BUT IF HIS FORMER PRISON-ERS WERE ANY INDICATION, WHATEVER THE U.N. DOES TO HIM WILL BE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE VERDICT HE GOT FROM A JURY OF HIS PEERS.
END

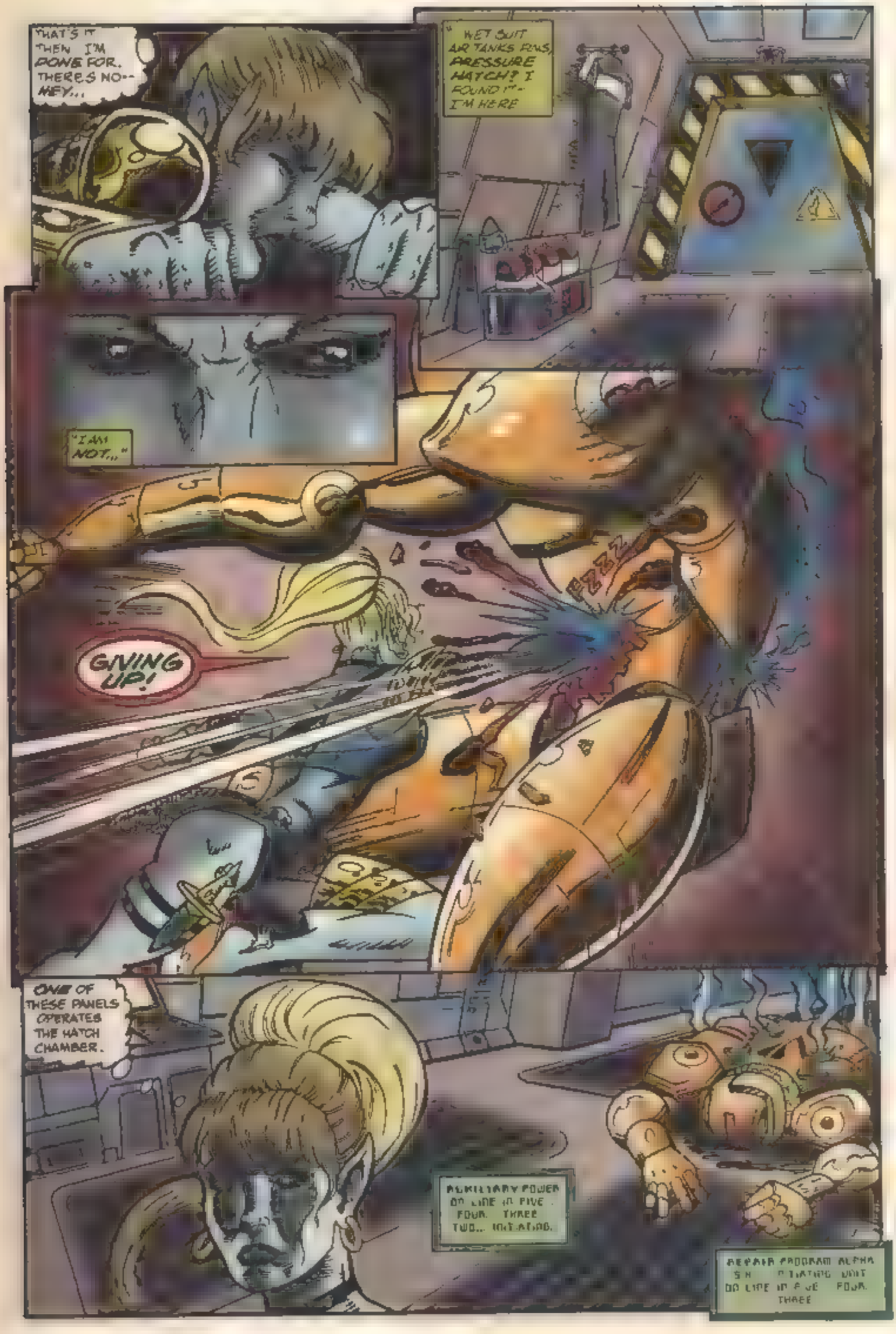
KYMAERA IN
MOTHER MAY I
WHAT HAPPENED?
SHE'S GONE!
OBVIOUSLY. HOW?
I ONLY LEFT HER FOR A FEW MIN -
ENOUGH! ALERT THE CREW
HAVE MAX SHUT UP IN THE "MINI" AND TRACK HER
SHE'S BOUND TO DISCOVER WHERE SHE IS--
--AND IF THAT HAPPENS,
PREP THE ESCAPE POD JUST IN CASE
FIND HER ZAN DROFF!
IF SHE GETS AWAY I'LL TAKE IT OUT OF YOUR HIDE

AROOGA AROOGA AROOGA AROOGA
UH-OH. ALARMS I'D BETTER MOVE IT
AMAZING THAT I GOT THIS FAR--
--WHEN YOU CONSIDER I ALMOST DIED MOMENTS AGO SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE HYDRO-P FORMULA ..
" A FORMULA DESIGNED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DEHYDRATE AND WEAKEN ATLANTEANS.
" THEN I GLANCED OVER AND SAW A WASTE BASKET NEXT TO SOME ELECTRICAL CABLES
" I KNEW IF I COULD START A PAPER FIRE THE SPRINKLER SYSTEM WOULD ACTIVATE SLOWLY I CRAWLED OVER AND USED THE LAST OF MY STRENGTH
" TO RIP THE CABLES OUT
IT FELT SO GOOD


HELLO WHAT'S THIS?
HEY WAIT A MINUTE--
--COMMUNICATIONS ROOM PIPING HATCHES GRATED FLOORS
I'M ON A SUB-MARINE!
THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING!
BUT FIRST I'LL MAKE A CALL.
MICHELE'S LATER
I ENJOYED THAT I NEVER USED TO HAVE TO RESTRAIN MYSELF WHEN I FIND MATRIX-PART OF ME WANTS TO DO THE SAME TO HER
SHE SAID MY DNA'S STILL MALLEABLE FROM MY MUTATION. I THINK SHE KNOWS A WAY TO CHANGE ME BACK TO NORMAL IF I CAN JUST
AHE!


DON'T MAKE THIS DIFFICULT GIRLIE
JUST GREAT-- MINI BATTLE ARMOR.
I'M TOO WEAK TO TAKE THIS GUY ON RIGHT NOW
I CAN'T DITCH THIS GUY!
AND HE KNOWS THIS SHIP WAY BETTER THAN I DO
I'VE GOT TO FIND A HATCH ON THE OUTER HULL
YIKES!
HE'S RIGHT ON TOP OF ME!
WHERE'RE THE NEW WARRIORS WHEN I REALLY NEED THEM?
UH OH, CLOSED HATCH UP AHEAD-- MAYBE MORE BEHIND IT.


"NOT ANYMORE!
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
"OH NO WHICH WAY DO I GO?"
I HOPE THE RIGHT WAY IS THE RIGHT WAY.
HEY!
GOTCHA!
AND FOR BEING SUCH A PAIN, GIRLIE--
ALLEY OOP!
UNGH!


THAT'S IT THEN I'M DONE FOR. THERE'S NO-- HEY...
WET SUIT AIR TANKS PLUS, PRESSURE HATCH? I FOUND IT-- I'M HERE
"I AM NOT..."
GIVING UP!
ONE OF THESE PANELS OPERATES THE HATCH CHAMBER.
AUXILIARY POWER ON LINE IN FIVE FOUR. THREE TWO... INITIATED.
REPAIR PROGRAM ALPHA SIX OPERATING UNIT ON LINE IN FIVE FOUR. THREE

TWO OF LIFE POWER LEVELS SEEM FIVE PERCENT
PRESSURE GAUGE THERMOMETER VIEW SCREEN FOR THE PRESSURE CHAMBER.
...THIS IS IT!
THERE. IT'S DONE -- I CAN OPERATE THE OUTER HATCH FROM A LEVER IN THE PRESSURE CHAMBER
HI♪♫
NOW YER GONNA --
HUH?
NO TIME TO WORK THE PRESSURE HATCH --
-- SO HIS SUIT BETTER BE AS AIR-TIGHT AS IT LOOKS
I DON'T THINK SO, HONEY.
?
NO!

COME TO PAPA

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
VENGEANCE SHANG CHI
NEW WARRIORS NICK FURY
MIDNIGHT SONS
157
DIRECT EDITION
15711
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That, I think, is all you need to know from me.

Tue Sorensen
c/o Waage
Ewaldsgade 2,II.tv
DK-2200 Copenhagen N
Denmark

Thank you for your letter, Tue. The best told stories will let you know the characters well enough, that you should know their feelings and views of the world. It's something that Stan Lee did with Spider-Man, and writers like Ann continue to do with her work today.

Dear Richard and Michael,

Regarding MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS Issues #150 and 151; I would like to give them praises. To Ms. Nocenti, excellent work. You have outdone the boys best. Marvel made the right choice when they hired you-- your story really made me think. I fell in love with Typhoid Mary way back in Daredevil. I've followed her through Spider-Man, and back into the pages of MCP. But this was one of the best-- no, it was the best! Mary has finally come full circle I salute you. It was MARVELous writing, MARVELous art, MARVELous coloring and lettering. In short MARVELous! The only thing to make it better would be her own mini-series (BIG HINT)! Oh yes, I also liked Steel Raven, nice touch. I normally have harsh words and comments against an issue, but not here. So Mary, Typhoid Mary, Bloody Mary, or Mary Walker, there is a special place in my home for you; *top shelf of my collection.* I know two comics that will be set aside for autographs (if I ever get to meet you at a convention). Lots of luck to you in the future, and keep up the MARVELous work. Till next time

James B Moore
(address withheld by request)

It was MARVELous of you to write, James. We hope we can coax Ann back to do more of her wonderful writing for us. Have you read her most recent work for our distinguished competition? Ann's work is always compelling.

Dear MCP,

Issue #152 was the best overall issue I have read in a long time. All four stories have good beginnings, and they made me sit up and write for a change. I don't usually like Vengeance, but I even found this enjoyable (although you did kill off Ms. Taylor, a very likely looking partner for the story)! I found the art for Moon Knight a little sketchy and the Wolverine cover is abominable (and with adamantium). My overall comment for the issue-- Wow! The change in issues #150 and 151's layout was refreshing. Let's see it crop up again from time to time, and keep the new format quality up.

Ian Snel
(address withheld by request)

We are glad issue #152 could get you to write Ian. We like what is happening with the new format, though we're still going through with some fine-tuning

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TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

COVER BY REGGIE JONES

VENGEANCE

ALTERED SPIRITS
PART 2 OF 3
"SOULS OF SUFFERING"

WRITER .....CHRIS COOPER
BREAKDOWNS ..... REGGIE JONES
FINISHES .....FRED HARPER
LETTERS ....MATT MALEY
COLORS .....GEORGE ROUSSOS

Power crazed Phantome is on the loose. Seeking vengeance and revenge against criminals no matter what the offense!

SHANG CHI
MASTER OF MARTIAL ARTS
PART 2 OF 3
"THE GAUNTLET"

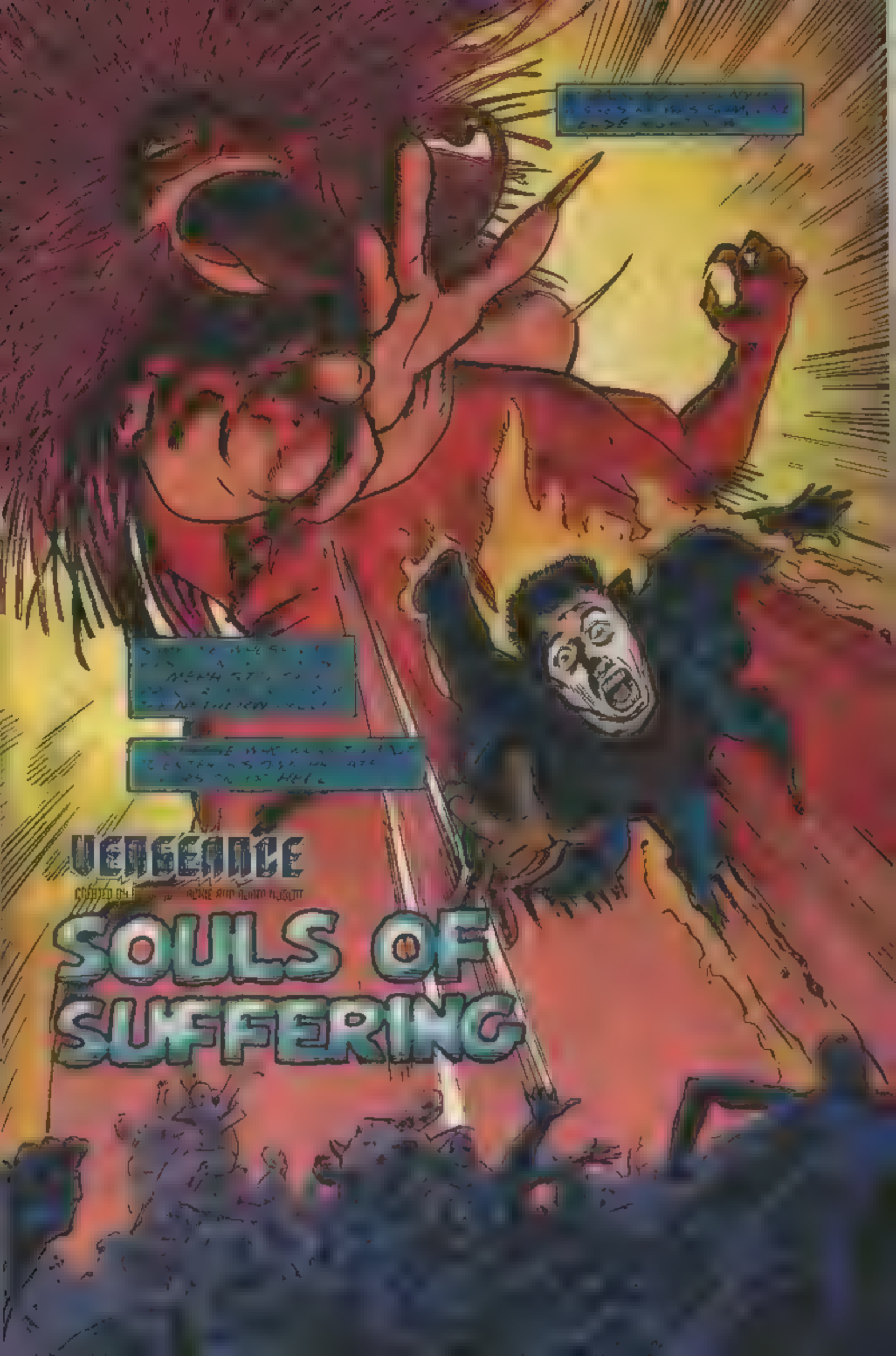
WRITER .....KARL BOLLERS
PENCILS ....CARY NORD
INKS .....BAMBOS GEORGIO
LETTERS .... UL HIGGINS
COLORS .....ASHLEY POSELLA

Shang Chi confronts Lazarus, once known as the Midnight Slasher, now the kidnapper of the woman he loves, Leiko Wu!

FROM RICHARD AND MICHAEL

The telephone is ringing; no, make that both telephones. There is paperwork and memos piled high upon our desks. Millie from accounting needs some information for some vouchers, and someone from promotions needs the sollcits for the next three months. And there is work to get out to the production bullpen, and another book needs to get down to manufacturing. Then Fred or John from the mail room comes walking in with a stack of packages from Federal Express. And for a few minutes everything stops. We open the packages, and ooh-and-ah as we pass the pages around the office. As well as you may know an artist's work, it's always a surprise to see what's been sent in. And you remember how exciting it is to work in this industry. Then just as suddenly as it stopped, there's a freelancer at the front desk, copies to be made, plots and scripts to be sent out. And Millie still needs the information for those vouchers.

Waiting for guys from the mailroom,
Richard and Michael


VENGEANCE
SOULS OF SUFFERING

I CREATED YOU AS A MOCKERY OF GHOST RIDER'S IMAGE.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
I'M CHANGING! THE PAIN--
YOUR SKELETON WILL BE OF THE DEEPEST BLACK A COLOR TO MATCH YOUR SOUL
YOU WILL RIDE A MOTORCYCLE, AS HE DOES A MOTORCYCLE INFUSED WITH THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENT THAT HE HOLDS SO DEAR
AARGH!
AND YOU WILL BE NAMED VENGEANCE!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, BADILINO?
ISN'T THIS WHAT YOU WANTED?
WHAT HAS MEPHISTO DONE TO ME?
GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, GET AWAY FROM THESE
LOST SOULS
IT'S NOT OVER
MY GOD REFLECTED IN HIS EYES
ACTUALLY, I THINK YOUR KIND OF CUTE!
I I'M A MONSTER!!
PHANTOME?!?

JUST A BAD DREAM.
THOUGH THIS PLACE-- OBVIOUSLY A HOMELESS SHELTER OF SOME KIND-- IS IT'S OWN KIND OF NIGHTMARE
--ALL I SAID WAS THAT, FOR A HOMELESS GUY, YOU'RE KIND OF CUTE. NO NEED TO BE SCREAMIN' AN HOLLERIN' OVER IT!
YOU MUST WORK HERE HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN OUT?
HARD TO SAY YOU WERE UNCONCIOUS WHEN THE COPS BROUGHT YOU IN LAST NIGHT--
WEEKS?!! STRANGE... AND I FEEL DIFFERENT...
CALL ME A CAB AND SPOT ME THE FARE I'LL REIMBURSE YOU AFTER I CHECK IN WITH MY PRECINCT
MY NAME'S DNYSHA NICE TO MEET YOU TOO
OH SORRY BADILINO I'M A COP.
--SAID THEY FOUND YOU PASSED OUT IN AN ALLEY, WITH NO I.D. WHO KNOWS, YOU COULD'VE BEEN IN A DAZE FOR WEEKS
YEAH, YOU DIDN'T LOOK LIKE YOU'D BEEN WANDERIN' THE STREETS FOR TOO LONG..
MY POWERS AS VENGEANCE MUST BE GONE! THAT'S WHAT FEELS DIFFERENT. PHANTOME MUST HAVE STOLEN THEM!
OR MAYBE..
..AND EVEN COPS GET DOWN AND OUT ONCE IN A WHILE BUT I'LL STILL HAVE TO MAKE SOME CALLS, CHECK YOU OUT..
SEE IF YOU'RE FOR REAL
--MAYBE NONE OF IT WAS REAL! PHANTOME... MY WHOLE LIFE AS VENGEANCE ALL A PSYCHOTIC DELUSION??
I'VE FINALLY SNAPPED OUT OF IT TO FIND I'M NORMAL-- I'M FREE!

WHILE ANOTHER PART OF BROOKLYN
FREE!
I'M FINALLY, TOTALLY FREE! THIS IS WHY I WANTED VENGEANCE'S POWER SO BADLY, GARGANTUA--
--BECAUSE WITH POWER LIKE THIS, I CAN GO ANYWHERE, DO ANYTHING!
RIGHT NOW, BOSS, WE IS DOIN' AT LEAST 250 IN A 40 M.P.H. ZONE -- AND IT'S GIVIN' ME A HEART ATTACK!
GET OVER IT, GARG--
--AND GET INTO THE THRILL! NOW I CAN DO WHAT I NEVER COULD HAVE DONE AS AN ORDINARY HUMAN.
..RACE THE WIND IF I WANT TO...
..GET EVEN WITH JERKS FOR THE LITTLEST ANNOYING THINGS, IF I WANT TO!
HEY! DAT JOIK JUST RAN THE RED LIGHT! COULDA KILLED US!

C'MON C'MON C'MON-- I'M LATE FOR WORK AS IT IS WHAT'S THE HOLDUP?
GREAT-- NOW THERE'S ALL THIS HONKING AND SCREECHING TIRES FROM BEHIND ME.
PROBABLY SOME BLASTED AMBULANCE IS TRYNG TO GET THROUGH TOUGH NOBODY'S GET-TIN' PAST ME, PAL NO--
--BODY
I CAN SEE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO WHIP YOU INTO
KOOM
OH MY. IT SEEMS THE BURNING TOUCH OF THE LASH WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM!
UH. , BOSS , DO YOU THINK MAYBE YOOZ IS OVERREACTIN'?

NONSENSE, GARG HE JUST NEEDED SOME CORRECTION.
LOOK-- HE EVEN WANTS TO SAY HE'S SORRY. THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY, ISN'T IT?
UUUUNGH...
WELL THEN, LET'S KISS AND BAKE UP.
I KISS...
AND YOU BAKE UP!
GLMPH?!
APOLOGY ACCEPTED
NNNNNNNNNNN
BOSS. THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU
I MEAN, WHAT LL YA DO TO SOMEBODY WHO REAR-ENDS YOU?
WHATEVER I WANT!! BECAUSE THE POWER IS MINE!!!

EASY, GREENBURG YOU'RE, UH, IN SICK BAY. IT'S OKAY.
...JUST HOLD HIM DOWN ONE MORE SECOND, BADILINO HE SHOULD BE CALMING DOWN.
I-I AM KIROK!! MIRIMAN!
THERE HE GOES HE CAN BE A HANDFUL WHEN HE'S COMING OFF A BAD TRIP. THANKS FOR THE HELP, BAD LINO
SURE THING. I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DEAL WITH THIS EVERY
SICK BAY SAFE
WHATEVER THEY'RE PAYING YOU, IT'S NOT ENOUGH.
ACTUALLY, I'M A VOLUNTEER
YOU'RE KIDDING! WHY STICK WITH IT?
SAVED YOUR SEXY BUTT, DIDN'T IT? IT'S A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT.
I'LL REMEMBER THAT-- AND YOU, AND THESE PEOPLE -- WHEN I'M BACK TO MY NORMAL LIFE--
HUH?
IT'S NOT OVER NOT OVER.
AND WE TAKE YOU LIVE TO ATLANTIC AVE.
WHERE THE UNIDENTIFIED FLAMING-HEADED FEMALE IS WREAKING HAVOC, WITHOUT PROVOCATION!
BY GIVING UP BEING VENGEANCE, I'VE ONLY MADE THINGS WORSE NOW IT'S UP TO ME TO CONFRONT PHANTOME AND PUT THINGS RIGHT--
--BUT HOW CAN I STOP HER...WITHOUT THE POWER?!
NO!! IT'S PHANTOME!
IT WAS REAL! ALL OF IT WAS REAL!!
TO BE CONTINUED

"HE WOULD NEVER HAVE SURVIVED, BUT I BELIEVE IN BALANCES.
THE BULLET SHATTERED HIS RIB CAGE AND SHOCK SET IN WITH BLOOD LOSS. HE WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD BY THE TIME HIS FELLOW POLICE RADIOED FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.
"LEIKO
"I SAVED THAT MAN -- THAT BULLET WAS MEANT FOR ME. IF ONE DIES AT THE HANDS OF AN ENEMY, THEY SHOULD AT LEAST BE HIS OWN.
GAUNTLET
ACT II
"MY ACT OF MERCY HAD COST ME TIME I MUST THANKFULLY AN INSTANT SOONER AND I WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSUMED IN MY TORMENTOR'S FIERY TRAP. I AM BEING BAITED.
"PHYSICAL INJURY WAS UNAVOIDABLE BECOMING CARELESS
REMAIN CALM.
FOCUS.

A P[illegible] SMOKE FROM THE WAREHOUSE BLAST WARPS THE NIGHTAR'S PURITY SIRENS IN THE DISTANCE LET ME KNOW ITS FLAMES WILL BE SHORT-LIVED
I[illegible] AM TASTING BLOOD ON MY LOWER LIP AND PLANNING MY RECOURSE WHEN I CATCH THE SCENT OF GARCIA Y VEGA COUPLED WITH FINE LEATHER
I JUST KNEW YOU COULD DO IT
"A FIGURE - LARGE, GAUNT
NICE NIGHT FOR A SWIM, EH, "MASTER"?
"AND A VOICE
" QUITE FAMILIAR THE CREASED BROW, THE IVORY MANE...

"ALL TRAITS OF A MAN I ONCE KNEW AS THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER HE IS BLUNT--
I HAVE YOUR WOMAN AND I'M GONNA KILL HER
'T S N THAT SELFSAME HARDENED MANNER THAT HE PERFORMS ME WHY, HE FIRST SPEAKS OF THE SCREAMS OF HIS VICTIMS THE DIFFERENT PITCHES HE LISTENED FOR AS HE CARVED A BLOODY PATH THROUGH SAN FRANCISCO BACK IN 'THOSE DAYS.'
THESE LONG ANXIOUS DAYS BACK WHEN HE HATED THE WORLD- INSTEAD OF JUST ME.
'NEW HE PUFFS IN APPARENT WHIMSICAL DENIED HIS CRIMES- A WARRIOR' WHO WAS HIS EQUAL AND HADN'T ANY PITCH, FOR HE DID NOT SCREAM.
'INSTEAD I USED REASON TO SOOTHE THE BLOODLUST COURSING THROUGH HIM, PROMISING HELP DURING A SWEATY HANDSHAKE, THESE ARE THE THINGS HE SPEAKS OF..
"... AND FINALLY HIS THEN NEW FOUND TRUST BEING RIPPED AWAY... LIKE A POLICEMAN'S BULLET DID TO A PART OF HIM, ON THAT NIGHT, THE SLASHER DIED
'THOSE TWIN PUPILS OF MALICE THAT SERVE AS HIS EYES FROZEN YET DANCING WITH UNHOLY FLAME, BELONG TO A MAN THAT CALLS HIMSELF...
"...LAZARUS!

"AN INNER CALM TAKES ME TRYING TO CONVINCE THIS KILLER OF MY GOOD INTENTIONS THAT NIGHT AND THE INEPTITUDE OF THE POLICE - IS FUTILE
AND THAT'S WHY THE GAUNTLET, MASTER
...IN WHICH I'M THE LAST HURDLE, GET PAST ME AND MS. LEIKO WU IS YOURS
"THIS MAN IS BRIMMING WITH A HATE THAT HAS FESTERED FOR TOO MANY YEARS. HE BELIEVES IN MY COMPLICITY WITH THE LAW OFFICERS THOUGH I KNEW NOTHING.
A RUSH OF WARM AIR OVERTAKES ME AS THIS CREATURE OF REVENGE SWEAT AND DEAD ANIMAL SKIN ATTACKS
"MY HANDS BECOME LIGHTNING AND I FEEL THE STAFF'S SPLINTERS IMBED DEEPER IN MY PALMS WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE BLOW
"THE MOON HIDES ITS FACE LIKE A CHILD UNDER CLOUD-BLANKETS.

"... LEAVING ONLY LAZARUS' *COARSE* BREATHING...

"...THE *MADNESS* SEEPING FROM HIS PORES...

"...AND HIS *CIGAR*...

"...AS *GUIDES* TO WHERE HE INTENDS TO STRIKE *NEXT*.

"THE AIR WRAPS ITSELF WITH *TENSION* AS OUR PACE *QUICKENS*.

"SPARKS FROM OUR WEAPONS *ILLUMINATE* OUR DANCE AS THE FOREST ECHOES OUR STRUGGLE.

"I SEARCH FOR *WEAKNESS*...

THWOK

"...FIND IT...

"...AND SOMETHING IN MY OPPONENT'S JAW *POPS* LOOSE.

"I DO NOT CARE.

"TOO BUSY TASTING MY VICTORY, I DO NOT SEE THE DESPERATION IN THE EYES OF THE BEATEN ONE.
"DAMP WOOD SCREAMS, ITS CRACKLING VOICE PROTESTING THE FLAMES FROM LAZARUS' CIGAR.
"I AM HALFWAY THROUGH TELLING HIM TO TAKE ME TO LEIKO...
"...WHEN I FEEL THE HEAT AT MY BACK REPLACED BY A NUMBING COLD.
"THEN MY AIR IS CUT OFF AND I AM BEING LIFTED OFF MY FEET BY CALLOUSED FINGERS THAT DIG INTO MY THROAT.
"THE FOREST CONTINUES TO WAIL.
"MY FOE IS DEAF TO ITS CRIES.

"DARK SPOTS TAKE FORM BEFORE MY EYES.
"IT IS AS WHEN WE FIRST FOUGHT--HE IS IMPERVIOUS TO PAIN.
"PSYCHOKINETIC TRAITS.
"VIRTUALLY UNSTOPPABLE.
"I RISE--
"--AND ADVANCE--
"--AGAINST HIM.

"AS MY NEMESIS FALLS BEYOND MY REACH...
"...I RESOLVE THAT THIS GAME MUST END...
"HERE AND NOW"
NORD
1973
LAKE ASAK
1971
HERE LIES
LYO BAER
1968
TO BE CONTINUED...